

THE
SPIRITUAL
FAVORITE
AT THE THRONE
OF GRACE.

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in Divinity.

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to prevent unperfect Copies.

Proverbs 29. 26.

Many seeke the Rulers favour, but every mans judgement commeth from the Lord.

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THE SPIRITUAL FAUORITE AT THE THRONE OF GRACE.

NEHEMIAH I. II.

O Lord I beseech thee, let now thine eare bee attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants who desire to feare thy name : and prosper I pray thee thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this Man.

N the ninth ver.
the holy man
minds God of
his promise
made to his people, that

A if

The spirituall Favorite

if they should turne unto him, and keepe his Commandements and do them: though they were cast out to the utmost parts of Heaven, yet he would gather them thence, &c. I will touch a little on them two verses, and then come to that I meane to dwell on, from the words read.

No promise of mercy, but to those that re-
turne,

If you turne unto me, and
keepe my Commandements.
There is no promise of
mercy, but to those that
turne, the Scripture is per-
emptorie in deniall of
mercy to such as goe on in
their sins: Heaven could
not brooke the Angels
themselves having sinned,
and neither such, nor such
shall

*shall enter into the Kingdom
of Heaven.* Yet how many are there that blesse themselves , that it shall go well with them, though they cast off all Gods yoakes, and Divine bonds, that might bow them to better courses, as if words were but wind ; when we see here God made his word good against his owne deare people, *If yee sinne I will scatter you to the farthest parts of the world,* wee see in the former verse.

A proud , presumptuous sinful disposition, may slight God, & the messengers of the word and all; now when wee come to

A 2, threa-

threaren: but when God comes to execute, will he shake it off then? will swearers, and blasphemers, and filthy persons shake off the execution as they can the threatnings? God sayth none that are such shal enter into heave, but his wrath shall smoake against them, and shall be as a fire that shall burne to hell, against such persons as blesse themselves in wicked courses; and when God comes to the execu-
tion, they desire the mountaines to fall upon them. There are none more presumptuous against the threatnings, & none more base and fearefull when it comes

comes to execution. As wee see in presumptuous, prophane Belteshazer, that was quaffing in the boutes of the Temple, and scorning Religion, and God ; when there comes a hand-writting on the wall, his knees knocke together, and his joynts tremble : so let there be any evidence of execution; and wee see all the Tyrants in the booke of God, and that have beeene in the world that have trifled at religion, of all men they are most disconsolate and fearefull, as wee see in Belteshazer and others.

I beseech you therefore take heede : God will seale all his threatenings

with executions in due time, as he did to his owne people, what is the reason wee should promise our selves more immunitie then they had?

If yee turne and keepe my Commandements, and doe them. Here are three conditions. Though you were were cast to the utmost parts of the world, I will gather you thence.

If you turne. The holy man Nehemiah, puts God in mind of his promise, and his argument is from the like, and indeed from the lesse to the greater: Because, God would rather of both performe his promises then his threatenings

nings ; because mercy is his owne proper worke. Now, as he had beene just in punishing his people, so he would be mercifull in restoring of them againe ; therefore he saith, *Returne and keepe my Commandements and doe them, and though yee were scattered to the utmost parts of the earth, yet I will gather you thence.* And hee did gather them thence upon their repentence, he did performe his promise at length.

Beloved, the full accomplishment of this yet remaines ; for this people to this day , since the death of Christ, since they drew the guilt of that sa-

creed blood on them, they
are scattered about the
earth to every Nation, and
have not a foot of land of
their owne, but are the
scorne and hissing of Nati-
ons: notwithstanding this
promise will bee perfor-
med upon their repen-
tance, God will bring
them againe, as Saint *Pauſt*
calls it a kind of a resurre-
ction, the conversion of the
Jewes. So it is true of us
all, though we were scat-
tered as dust, as wee shall
be, in the grave ere long
turned to dust, God will
gather the ashes, hee will
gather all those parts of
ours: even as his power
gathered his people toge-
ther,

at the Throne of Grace.

9

ther, so his power at length will gather us all; we have his promise for the one, as well as the other.

Therefore let us comfort our selves with the performance of this promise, for the performance of the grand promise of the resurrection. Indeede the grand promise of the resurrection, is the ground of the performance of all other promises. As you have it in *Ezekiel*, concerning the dry bones : faith God, *I will cloath these dead bones with flesh and skin, &c. therefore I will restore you againe.* God that will restore our dust, and bring our bodies toge-

A 5 ther,

ther, that were scattered here and there, he will restore us out of sicknes and trouble, if it stand with his glory and our good.

Now, after the argument that he useth to persuade God from his word of threatening and promise, he comes to the argument from their relation.

These



These are thy Servants.

THOUGH sinfull servants, yet they are thy fervants: These are thy people, thou hast no other people in the world but these, and thou art their God: He pleads from former favours. Thou hast redeemed them by thy great power and strong hand.

It is a good argument to plead with God by former favors: Because there is no shadow of change in him; he is alway like himself,

It is a
good Ar-
gument to
plead with
God for
former fa-
vours.

The spirituall Favorite

selte, hee is never drawne dry. And it is a great honour to go to him for new favours upon former; because hee hath an infinite supply. We may draw so much from men, as they have not afterwards to make good, but wee cannot honour God more, then to goe to him with a large faith, to fetch large favours from him: the more hee gives, the more he can give, and the more he is willing to give, *To him that hath shall be given.* We cannot honour God more, then to goe to him upon former favours, and with enlarged desires, *Thou hast redemeed us and bee me gracious*

gracious to us before. 8. v. 1

Wee may much more take this argument in our mouthes, and presse the Majesty of God : *Thou hast redeemed us, not out of Egypt or Babylon, the land of the North, but with the blood of thy Sonne, from hell and damnation; and therefore thou canst redeeme us from this petty misery, from these enemies: we may allege that grand favour to all other petty redempions, whatsoever they are. Hee that hath given us Christ, that hath not spared his owne Son, but gave him to death for us all, how shall he not with him give us all things else?*

Rom. 8.

Rom. 8. He that hath been so large and bountifull as to give us his own Sonne, that gift to admiration, so, *God loved the world,* how cannot we plead with him for all other favours whatsoever, whether they concerne the life of grace or glory, or our present condition while we live in this world? Wee may pleade it much more I say, *Thou hast redeemed us.* But these things I will not presse further now.

In the eleventh verse he comes to presse it still, and repeates that which hee had said before, *Lord I beseech thee, let thine eare bee attentive to the prayer of thy servant,*

servant, and of thy servants
that desire to feare thy
Name.

Let thine ear be attentive
to the prayer of thy servants.
It is a prayer, and thou art
a God hearing prayer. They
be thy servants, and thou
regardest thy servants.
Here are but a few petiti-
ons in this large request :
*remember, be attentive, and
give me favour.* The most
of the prayer is spent in a
preparative considering
the Attributes of God,
and in confession, & strong
reasons from the Word, of
promises and threatenings,
and from their relation ;
and then he makes good
the relation, *Wee are thy
servants,*

servants, because wee desire
to feare thy Name.

To shew that indeed :



It is an excellent skill and
art in Prayer, to have strong
Arguments.

It is an
excellent skill
and art in
prayer to
have strong
arguments.

Then the Suit comes
off easily : As in
Psal. 90, It is a
prayer of Moses the man of
God, and yet the least part
of the Psalme is prayer :
Teach us to number our
days, &c. That is all the
petition, though the peti-
tion be short, yet it is effi-
cacious.

cacious when the heart is warmed and strengthened with strong reasons before ; when the heart is elevated and raised with the consideration of the Majesty and the truth of God ; and when the heart is strengthned with strong convincing reasons , that God will heare, when wee preffe him with his word : I say , when the heart is thus raised and warmed , all the petitions come easilly off .

Therefore it is an excellent thing, Beloved, to study the Scriptures, and to study all the arguments whereby holy men have prevailed with God in Scrip-

Scripture, and to see in what case those Arguments were used; they are of use and force to prevaile with God.

It is a pittifull thing now, for Christians under the glorious light of the Gospel, to come to God only with bare naked petitions (if they come from a true heart, they have their force that GOD should regard them) and have not reasons to presse God out of his own word, they cannot bind God with his own promise, nor with Arguments that hee hath been bound with before. Let a child but cry to the father or mother, there is

simile.

is reliefe presently for the very cry: but if it bee not one that is a child but is of growne yeares, the Father lookes for arguments that are mooving to presse him with: So here, *Nehemiah* he presseth God with moving & strong arguments, and hee repeates and forceth them; hee doth not onely alleadge them, but inforceth them, *Oh Lord I beseech thee let thine eare be attent to the prayer of thy servant, and of thy servants that desire to feare thy name.*

He desireth God to bee attentive: Hee presseth God, and indeede he doth it to warm his owne heart:
for

forwhen we have humbled our heart low enough, and broken it with the consideration of our own unworthinesse ; and then warmed it with the consideration of Gods goodnesse, and strengthened it with the consideration of Gods promise and truth ; then wee are sure of a gracious successe.

*Let thine eare bee attent
to the prayer of thy servant,
and of thy servants.*

*How did they know that
they were thine ?*

*Because there was no other people in the world
that knew God but they.*

And

And hee knew that the Saints where ever they were had a spirit of prayer, and would remember the case of the Church; therefore he saith remember my prayer, and the prayer of thy servants: For if the prayer of one righteous man prevale much, much more the prayer of many. If there had beene but ten righteous in Sodome, Sodome had beene preserved. Now this hee aleageth to God, remember the prayer of thy servant, of mine, and the prayer of thy servants. As Tertullian an anciant Father saith very well, when men joyne together, they offer a holy kind of violence

Tertul.

violence to God: prayer is a kinde of wraftling, and contending with God, a striving with him. *Let me alone* saith God to *Moses*. It is a binding of him with arguments, and promises of his owne; and it is so forcible that he desires (as it were) to bee let alone: Now if the prayer of one, be a wrestling, and striving and forcing of him, as it were against his will, (that he said, *Let me alone*; as if he could doe nothing except he gave over praying) What are the prayers of many, when there is a multitude of them?

Therfore we may looke for a comfortable issue
of

of our prayers, and humiliation, that is performed at this time. The desires of so many Christian soules touched with the spirit of God, and with the case of the Church (which God doth tender) cannot bee unefectuall, it must needs draw plenty of blessings from heaven. I will not enter into the common place of prayer, having spoken of it upon another occasion:but surely you see the holy man *Nehemiah* stood so much upon it, that hee hoped to speede, because hee, and others prayed; (holy *Daniel*, and others with him) It was such a gracious messen-

messenger to send to hea-
ven for helpe and for all
good, that *Daniel*, though
it cost him his life, that he
should be cast into the Ly-
ons den, hee would not o-
mit it for his life. Take a-
way prayer, and take away
the life and breath of the
soule; Take away breath,
and the man dies: as soone
as the soule of a Christian
beginnesto live he prayes.
As soone as *Saul* was con-
verted, *behold hee prayeth*.
A child as soone as hee is
borne, hee cryes; and a
Christian will not loose
his prayer for his life, as
we see in holy *Daniell*. For
what is all the comfort
that he hath, but that that
is

is derived from God: and
God will be sued unto for
all the favours hee be-
stowes: Whatsoever is
from his favour it comes
as a fruit of prayer (for the
most part) though he goe
beyond our desires many
times: yet ordinarily what
we have if we bee his chil-
dren, we have it as a fruit
of prayer. Therefore I
beseech you let us be stir-
red up to this dutie, as we
see Nehemiah here, remem-
ber the prayer of thy ser-
vant, & coram. ad. seruor.
And when wee pray to
God, let us pressel him, as
we see here, Bee attentive,
verse 3, and here againe,
be attentive, he presseth up-

on God. It is no sinfull tautologie to comie againe and againe. ^{no} God doves to heare the same song againe and againe; this musick is not tedious, but pleasing to him. And this pressing is for us to warme our hearts, perhaps one petition will not warme them, and when they are warmed by a second, let us labour to warme them more and more, and never give over till we have thoroughly warmed our hearts, Be attentive, be attentive to my prayer, and if mine will not prevaile, be attentive to the prayers of others, let the prayers of all prevaile, *The prayer of thy servant*

servant, and of thy servants.

But how doth he make it good, they are thy servants :



They desire to feare thy name.

Emptie relations have no comforts in them : To professe ones self a servant, and not to make it good that he is a servant. Wee must make good the relatiō we stand in to God, before wee can claime interest in the favor of God

Empty relations have no comforts in them.

B 2 by

by our relation. Servants and Christians, and professors ; here are glorious titles, but if they be empty titles , if wee cannot make them good when we come to God with them : we cannot say we have any interest in God from empty titles, it is rather an aggravation of our sin.

God will be honored in all those that come neare him, either in their obedience, or in their confusion: therefore here, the holy man did not think it enough to say, *Thy servant, and thy servants, but who desire to feare thy name.*

He goes to make it good that he was the servant of
God,

God, not from any outward thing , but from his inward disposition , the feare of God, which I will not now stand to speake largely of. God requires the heart , and Religion is most in managing and tuning the affections , for they are the wind that carries the soule to every dutie. A man is like the dead sea without affections: Religion is most in them. The Devil hath braine enough, hee knowes enough; more then any of us all; but then he hates God, hee hath no love to God, nor no feare of God, but onely a slavish feare, he hath not this reverentiall feare , child-

Religion
most seene
in the af-
fections.

Simile.

like feare. Therefore let us make it good that wee are the servants of God, especially by our affections, and chiefly by this of feare, which is put for all the worship of God : it is put in stead of those conditions spoken of ver. the 9
If you turne to me, and keepe my Commandements and doe them, then I will make good my promise : Now (saith hee) taking up the same strength of argument ; *We desire to feare thy name.* As if hee should have said, we turne to thee, and obey thy Commandements, & desire to doe them ; it is all one, *wee desire to feare thy name :* for those that feare

feare God, will turne to him, and to desire to obey his Commandements and to doe them; it is all one as to doe them. If a man should doe them and not from the feare of God, all were nothing but a car-kasse of obedience. I will not stand longer on that.

How doth hee make it good, that hee feared the name of God.

He makes it good from this, that hee had good desires, *Wee desire to feare thy name.* We desire it for the present, and for the time to come; whence we will observe two or three

B 4 things

things shortly, as may be
vsefull to us. First of all
out of this, that this desire
to feare the name of God,
is brought as an argument
to prevale in prayer; We
may observe that,



*Those that will prevale
with God in prayer, must
look to the bent of their foudes
for the time to come, and for
the present.*

Those
that will
prevale
in prayer
must look
to the bent
of their
affections.

Regard thy servants
that desire to feare thy
name: For to come
to God without such a
frame of soule as this, to
desire

desire to please God in all things for the present, & for the time to come, it is to come as Gods enēy; & will God regard his enemies? When one comes with a purpose to live in any sin, without a desire for the time to come, to regard all Gods Commandments, he comes as Gods enemie: hee comes as it were with his dagge to shoote at God, hee comes with his weapon. Who will regard the petition of a man that comes to wound him at the same time? When a man comes to God with a purpose to sinne, he comes to wound God at the same time as an

B 5 enemie,

enemie, and is hee like to
speede? For what are our
sinnes, but that that makes
us enemies to God? they
are oposite to him as can
be, they make us hateful to
God. Therfore we must be
able to say with good *Nehemiah*, when we come to
God to make it good that
wee are servants indeede,
We desire to feare thy name.
As *Jeremias* tells them,
*Jer. 7. Will you steale and
oppresse and commit adulter-
ry, and yet stand before me?*
will you doe this and this
villany, and stand before
me? *What hast thou to doe*
(faith God) *Psalme 50. to
take my name into thy mouth*
and batest to be reformed?

If

If we hate to be reformed,
and do not desire to serve
God for the time to come,
what have wee to doe to
take his name into our
mouthes, especially in the
holy exercise of prayer?

Psalmie 66. If I regard iniquitie in my heart, the Lord will not heare my prayer. If a man doe but regard to live in iniquitie for the time to come, the Lord will not heare his prayer. Therefore if wee will bee able to prevaile with God in our petitions, we must say with holy Nehemiah, Wee desire for the time to come to feare thy name. I beseech you let us remember it.

And

And then (to omit other things) Wee desire to feare thy name, we see that



Christianity consists especially in holy desires.

Religion, especially is in holy desires.

The greatest part of Christianity is to desire to bee a sound Christian with all his heart. Religion is more in the affections of the soule, then in the effects and operations: It is more in the resolutions, and purpose of the soule, then in any effects wee can yeeld to God. There is much desire in al our performances: therefore

fore saith the holy man
here, *We desire to feare thy
holy name.*

Q. Why are desires, such
trials of the truth of
Grace?

Because they are the
immediate issues of the
soule: desires, & thoughts
and such like; they are pro-
duced immediately from
the soule without any
help of the body, or with-
out any outward manife-
station, they shew the tem-
per and frame of the soule.
Thereupon God judgeth
a man by his desires; and
that which he desires, if it
bee a true desire, hee shall
have

Holy de-
sires the
immediate
issues of
the soule.

have and be partakers of. The godly man desires to serve God all the dayes of his life ; and for ever hee shall doe it : a wicked man desires to offend God if he might live everlasting- ly : God lookes upon him as his desire is, he shall not alway sinne here : but because hee hath an infinite desire of sin, he shall bee punished in hell eternally ; God lookes upon him as he desires , God values men by their desires.

But how are the truth
of these desires knowne ?

Tryall of
desires
whether
true.

I will name a few signes,
The truth of those desires
may

may be tryed thus, if they
be constant desires, and not
flashes: for then they come
from a new nature. Na-
ture is strong and firme:
Art is for a turne, to serve
a turne: when men perso-
nate a thing they doe it not
long; creatures that are
forced to doe so and so,
they returne to their own
nature quickly: but when
a man doth a thing natu-
rally, he doth it constant-
ly. So constant desires
argue a sanctified frame
of soule and a new crea-
ture; they argue that
the image of God is stamp-
ped upon the soule. Ther-
upon wee may know that
they are holy desires, that
they

I.
If constant

that they spring from a holy soule, if they be constant, if they be perpetuall desires, and not as a torrent that is vented for the present on a sudden, and then comes to nothing after: they are constant.

2.
If strong
and grow-
ing.

And likewise, if these desires be hearty strong desires, and not onely strong but growing desires; desire upon desire; desire fed with desire still, never satisfied till they be satisfied. Strong and growing desires argue the truth of desires: as indeede a childe of God hath never grace enough, never faith enough, never love enough, or comfort enough, till he come to heaven.

heaven. They are growing desires more & more: the Spirit of God that is the spring in him, springs up still further and further, till it spring to everlasting life, till it end in heaven, where all desires shall be accomplished, and all promises performed, and all imperfections removed, till then they are growing desires still. *We desire to feare thy Name, and to please thee in all things.*

Againe, true desires, they are not onely of the favour of God, but of graces for the altering of our nature: as Nehemiah here, he desires not the favor of God

3.
If for
grace as
well as
mercy.

so much, as he desires to feare Gods Name. Now when desire is of graces, it is a holy desire. You have not the worst men, but would desire with *Balaam*, to dye the death of the righteous, &c. that they might enjoy the portion of Gods people : but to desire grace, that is opposite to corrupt nature, as fire and water, this is an argument of a holy principle of grace in us, whence this desire springs ; when we desire that, that is a counter poyson to corrupt nature, that hath an antipathy to corruption. Therefore, when a man from the bottome of his heart

heart can desire, oh ! that I could serve God better, that I had more liberty to serve him , that I had a heart more inlarged, more mortified , more weaned from the world ; Oh!that I could feare God more. And of all graces, if it be a true desire, it is of such graces as may curbe us of our sinfull delights, and restraine us of our carnall liberty, and knit us neere to God, and make us more heavenly minded : the desire of these graces shew a true temper of soule indeed.

True desire is carried to grace as well as glory, and the desire of heaven it selfe.

A

4.
If more
for holiness
than happiness
in heaven.

A true spirit, that is touched with grace, with the Spirit of God ; it desireth not heaven it self so much for the glory, and peace, and abundance of all contentments, as it desires it, that it is a place where it shall be freed from sinne, and where the heart shall be inlarged to love God, to serve God, & to cleave to God for ever : and as it is a condition wherein he shall have the image and resemblance of *Iesus Christ* perfectly upon his soule : Therefore wee pray *Thy Kingdome come*, that is, we desire that thou wouldest rule more and more largely in our soules, and subdue all

all opposite power in us, and bring into captivity all our desires and affections, and let thy Kingdome come more and more. Let thy will be done by us, and in us more and more, *In earths as it is in heaven.* Here is a sweet prayer now serving to the first petition, *the hallowing of Gods name,* when we desire more to honour God, and to that purpose that he may rule in us more, and make us better: these desires argue an excellent frame of soul, as we see in Nehemiah, our desire is to feare thy Name.

True desires are likewise to the meanes of salvation, and

5.
If accom-
panied
with de-
sire after
the means
that con-
vey grace.

1 Pet. 2.

and to the meanes of sal-
vation as they convay
grace, as sincere milke ; as
you have it i Pet. 2. *As new
borne babes, desire the sincere
milke of the Word.* Where
a man hath holy desires of
any grace, and hath them
in truth , hee will desire
those meanes , whereby
those graces may most ef-
fectually bee wrought in
his heart : therefore hee
will heare the word , as
the word of God ; hee
comes not to heare the
Word because of the elo-
quence of the man that
delivers it, that mingles it
with his owne parts, hee
comes not to heare it as
the tongue of man : but he
sees

sees God in it ; it is the powerfull Word of God, because there goes the efficacie of the Spirit with it, to worke the graces he desires.

Therefore a man may know by his tast of divine truth, whether he desire grace : hee that desires grace, desires the meanes that may convay grace, and especially so farre as they convay grace. As new borne babes desire the sincere milke of the Word. You cannot stille a childe with any thing but milke, he desires no blending or mixing, but onely milke : so a true Christian desires divine truthes most ; because

cause the Spilit of God is effectuall by them, to worke grace and comfort in him. I will not enlarge my selfe in the point.

Vse.
Comfort
for weake
christians.

The comfortable obseruation hence is this, that weak Christians, that finde a debilitie, and faintnesse, and feeblenesse in their performances; hence they may comfort themselves, by their desire to feare God, and to worship God, and to serve him: if their desires bee true. Therefore in *Isaiah* 26. the Church alledgegeth it to God, *in the way of thy judgements have we sought thee, &c.* The desire of our soules is towards thy Name:

they

they bring it as a prevailing argument to God. So when we come to God, *The desire of our soules is toward thy Name.* Lord our indeavours are weake and feeble, but *the desire of our soules is to thy name*, and thou wilt not quench the smoaking flax : therefore wee come to thee with these weake and poore desires that we have : *The Lord will fulfill the desires of them that feare him*, Psal. 145. If they be but desires, if they be true, and growing, and constant desires, and desires of grace as well as of happinesse, as I shewed before.

Psal. 145.

The reason why God
C accepts

Why God
accepts of
desires.
Because
they are
the breath-
tings of
his Spirit.
simile.

accepts them, is partly be-
cause they spring from his
owne spirit : *these desires*
they are the breathings of
the spirit. For even as it
is in places where foun-
taines and springs are dig-
ged up, they are knowne
and discovered by vapors,
the vapors shew that there
is some water there, some
spring, if it were digged
up : so these desires, these
breathings to God for
grace and comfort, these
spirituall breathings, they
shew that there is a spring
within, and spirit within,
whence these vapors and
desires come ; therefore
they are accepted of God,
because they spring from
his

his owne Spirit.

And because they are pointed to heaven-ward, to shew that a man is turned ; for it is put here instead of turning, *Turne yee to me, saith the Lord* ; and he answereth here instead of turning, *My desire is to feare thy name*. Because, when the desire is altered, then the frame of the soule is altered, a man is turned another way ; the desire is the weight of the soule. What carries the soule, but desire ? Now when the soule is carried another way then before, it argues an alteration of the frame, therefore it pleaseth God to accept of thē.

Because
they ma-
nifest the
change of
the soule.

I beseech you let us often enter into our owne soules, and examine what our desires are, which way the bent of our soules is ; what cause we would have to flourish and prevaile in the world, Christs, or Antichrists, for God esteemes us by the frame of our desires : *Who desire to feare thy Name.*

And



*And prosper I pray thee thy
servant this day.*

Now he comes to his petition, *Prosper I pray thee thy servant this day.* Hee doth not capitulate with God for particular matters much, (for he knew hee had to deale with an all-wise God) but hee commends his petition in generall, *Prosper I pray thee thy servant, &c.* He was to attend the King, and he was in his attendance to mind the state of the

Church, for the re-edifying the walls and gates of *Ferusalem*: now faith he in generall, *Prosper thy servant*, he leaves it to God, how, and in what manner, being to deale (as I said) with an infinite wise God: onely he prayes in generall, *prosper thy servant this day.*

The true
knowledg
of our re-
lation to
God a
meanes to
strengthen
faith in
prayer.

He comes againe with his relation of *servant*, to teach us alway when wee come to God, to looke in what relation we stand to him, whether we be true servants or no: what work we doe for him, in what reference we doe what we doe, whether we doe it to please him as servants, or no.

no. I said something of the relation of servant before: I will adde a little here, because he repeates it foure or five times in this short prayer.

In all our services wee should looke to God: for our ayme in our workes shew what they are, whether they come from servants, or no. As the stamp upon a token makes it, if there be a good stamp on it, it is not the matter that makes it current. A stamp on silver makes it current as well as gold, though the metall of gold be better. So when things are done, because God commands them, to please God,

simile.

as a service to him : this makes it good that we are servants indeed, that the relation is good. When we goe about the service of the Church or Country, or place we live in, to thinke I doe God service here, and doe it as a service to God, who will be honoured and served in our service to others : herein I am a good servant, though the matter of my service be a common, base, and meane matter ; yet it hath a stamp upon it, it is *God's* will, *God* hath placed and planted mee here, and he will be served of me in this condition at this time, though the matter

ter of it bee an ordinarie thing. I know it may helpe the good of the Church : it hath reference to the will of God, and the good of the Church. Thus if wee doe what wee doe with an eye to God in the place where hee hath set vs, that wee doe it as to him, we are Gods servants whatsoever the worke is.

And let us remember oft to thinke of it, to bring it in our prayers : Master (say they when they were ready to be drowned) *dost thou not care that we perish?* They put him in minde of the relation they were in to him. So

C 5 when

when we can put God in
minde of our relation, Fa-
ther, we are thy children,
Lord, we are thy servants;
it will strengthen our faith
and hope of all good. Will
a Master suffer his servant
to miscarrie in his service?
surely God will never
turne away true hearted
servants, that have served
him a long time. It puts
us in minde of our duty,
and serves to strengthen
our faith: for as it is a
word of service on our
part, so it is a promising
word of all good from
God. Doth he expect,
that Masters should bee
good to their servants be-
cause they have a Master
in

in heaven, and will not the great Master of Heaven be good to his servants? you see how he followes the relation.



Prosper thy servant this
day.

WHAT is included in this word *pro-*

What is included in the word *proper*.

It includes not onely
successe, which is the
maine upshot of all, but all
that tends to good suc-
cesse :

cessē : *prosper thy servant this day* ; that is, direct thy servant this day how to doe, and to carry himself. And likewise assist thy servant ; when thou shalt direct him, assist him by thy strength, direct him by thy wisedome , prosper him with thy grace , give him good successe in all. It includes direction, and assistance , and good successe; in that he saith, *prosper thy servant*, it includes these things.

First of all, that in our selves, there is neither direction nor wisedome, nor abilitie enough for successe : we have not power in our selves to bring things

things to a comfortable issue : so it inforceth selfe deniall ; which is a good disposition when we come to God in prayer.

And then againe to attribute to God all, both wisedome, and strength, and goodnessse and all : here is a giving to God the glory of all, when hee saith , *prosper thy servant this day.*

Then in the third place, here is a dependance upon God ; not onely acknowledging these things to be in God ; but it implies a dependance upon God for these, *Prosper me Lord, I cannot prosper my selfe ; & thou who art the Creator,*

2.

3.

ator, hast wisedome and strength, and goodnesse enough: therefore I depend upon thee; upon thy wisedome for direction, and upon thy strength for assistance, I depend upon thy goodnesse, and all for a blessed issue, here is dependance.

4.

Againe in the fourth place, here is a recommendation of all by prayer: a recommendation of his inward dependance upon God for all. Now Lord prosper thy servant.

So that when we come to God for any prosperity and good successse, let us remember that wee bring selfe-deniall, and an acknow-

In our Petitions to God for any prosperitie or good successse, wee must bring selfe deniall.

knowledgement of all excellencie to be in God; to guide and direct and assist, and blesse us. And remember to depend upon him, to cast our selves on him: to bring our soules to close with the strong and wise, and gracious God, that God and our soules may close together. And then commend all by prayer *to cast our selves and our affaires, and to roll our selves* (as the Scripture faith) and all upon God: and then wee shall doe as the holy man *Nehemiah* did here, we shall desire to good purpose that God would prosper us. Indeed it is not in man to guide and direct

direct his owne way. Wee
are darke creatures, and we
have not wisedome e-
nough: and we are weake
creatures, wee have no
strength: we are nothing in
our owne strength. And
for successe, alas a thou-
sand things may hinder us
from it; for successe is no-
thing but the application
of all things to a fit issue;
and foreseeing all things
that may hinder, and a re-
moving of them; now
who can do this but God?

One maine circumstance
that besiegeth and besets a
businesse, may hinder an
excellent businesse: who
can see all things that be-
set a businesse? all cir-
cum-

cumstances that stand about a businesse : who can see all circumstancies of time , and place and persons, that are hindrances, or furtherances ? it must bee an infinite wisedome that must foresee them , man cannot see them. And when men doe see them, are there not sudden passions that come up in men that robbe them of the use of their knowlege ? that though they know them before : yet some sudden passion of feare or anger may hinder the knowledge of a man, that he is in a mist , when hee comes to particulars : whē hee comes to apply the know-

knowledge that he had before, he knowes not what to doe. So that unlesse God in a particular busines give successe, (who is infinitely wise and powerfull to remove al hindrances) there will be no successe.

Simile,

As it is in the frame of the body, it stands upon many joynts, and if any be out of tune, the whole body is sicke. And as it is in a clocke, all the wheels must be kept cleane and in order: so it is in the frame of a busynesse, there must all the wheeles be set a going, if one be hindred there is a stop in all. It is so with us in the affaires of this world, when wee deale

deale with Kings and States, if all the wheeles be not kept as they should there will be no successe or prosperity. *Nehemiah* knew this well enough, *prosper thou therefore.*

He meant not to be idle when he said this, *prosper thou*: for he after joyned his owne diligence, and waited. Therefore joyne that, if we would have our prayers to God, and our dependance upon him effectuall for prosperity and successe, be carefull to use the meanes, as he did, he stands before the King, and observed how he carried himselfe to see what words would come from the

With our
prayer for
successe,
wee must
use the
meanes.

the King ; and then hee
meant after to put in exe-
cution, whatsoever God
should discover.

Vse.

It should teach us (to
make this use of it) when
we deale in any matter, to
goe to God to prosper it,
and give successe, and di-
rection, and assistance, and
a blessed issue. For God,
that we may alway depend
upon him, he keepes one
part in heaven still : when
he gives us all likelihood of
things upon earth, yet he
reserves still the blessing,
till the thing be done, till
there be a consummation
of the busynesse, he keepes
some part in heaven : be-
cause he would have us
sue

sue to him, and be beholding to him, he will have us go up to heaven. Therefore when we have daily bread, we must pray for daily bread ; because the blessing comes from him. Our bread may choake us else, we may dye with it in our mouthes, as the Israelites did : but when we have things, we must depend on him for a blessing, all is to no purpose else.

Let us learne by this a direction to piety and holy walking with God : in all things to pray to God for a blessing. And to that purpose we must be in such a condition of spirit,
as

In what
condition
of soule
wee may
expect
prosperity
from God

as we may desire God to prosper us : that is , we must not be under the guilt of sin when we come to God to prosper us. And we must be humble, God will not prosper a businesse till we be humble. As in the case of the *Benjamites* , when they came, they were denyed, the first, second, and third time, till they prayed and fasted, and were thorowly humbled, they had their suit denyed : If the cause be never so good, till wee be humbled, God will not prosper it : because we are not in frame for the blessing; if we had it we would be proud. God , in preventing

venting mercy and care
will grant nothing till we
be humbled. Therefore
let us see that we be hum-
ble ; and see that the
matter be good that wee
beg God to blesse and
prosper us in, or else we
make a horrible idoll of
God, we make (with reve-
rence be it spoken) a divell
of *God*. Doe wee thinke
that *God* will give strength
to an ill busynesse ? This
is to make him a factor for
mischief, for the Divels
worke : Wee must not
come with such strange
fire before *God*, to trans-
forme *God*, to the contrary
to that he is : but come
with humble affections,
with

with repentant soules for our former sinnes. And let the thing it selfe be good, that we may come without tempting of him: let the cause be such that we may desire God's assistance without tempting of him, as we do when it is good and when we come disposed. Then com with a purpose to referre all to his service. Lord, if thou wilt blesse me in this businesse, the strength and incouragement I have by it, I will referre it to thy further service. Let me have this token of love from thee, that I have a good ayime in all, and then I am sure to speed well.

•Pro-



Prosper now thy Servant.

IT is an excellent poynt, if I had time to stand on it. I beseech you let it have some impression upon your hearts.

What is the reason that God blasts, and brings to nothing many excellent endeavours, and projects men set upon the busines of God, and of their callings in confidence of their wit and pride of their owne parts, they carrie things in the pride, and

D Strength

strength of their parts. Men come as Gods to a businesse, as if they had no dependance upon him for wisedome or direction, or strength; they carry things in a carnall manner, in a humane manner with humane spirits : therefore they never find either successe, or not good successe. Let us therfore commend all to God, *prosper thy servant.* Before hee went about the businesse, holy Nehemiah, he sowed pray-
ers in Gods bosome, and watered the seede with mourning ; as it is in this chapter hee mourned and prayed : when this busi-
nesse was sowne with
pryers

prayers, and watered with teares; how could hee but hope for good successe, he mourned and prayed to God, *heare thy servant.*

Now when wee deale with things in a holy manner, wee may without tempting God trust him. That which is set upon in carnall confidence and pride, it ends in shame: when men thinke to conceive things in witt, I, and in faction, and humane affections, God will not be glorified this way, God will bee glorified by humble dependant creatures, that when they have done the busynesse will ascribe

all to him ; Not unto us ,
but to thy name give the
praise. The direction and
assistance and blessing was
thine. Sayth God in Isay
50. towards the end, Goe
too now ye that kindle a fire ,
walke in the light of your
owne fire : but bee sure you
shall end in sorrow . You
will kindle a fire of your
owne devises , and walke
in the light of your fire ,
you will have projects
of your owne , and be
your owne caruers , but be
sure you shall lie downe in
darkenes and discomfort ;
you shall lie downe in sor-
row .

A proud unbroken
heart accounts these cour-
ses

ses poore courses : it is but a course of weak and poore spirits to pray and fast, and humble themselves to God, and to feare God : alas ! what are these ? these are weake courses : I hope wee have stronger parts, and meanes to carrie things. So they have a Kingdom in their braine. What is the issue of these vaine men, when God discovers all their courses to be vaine at length, to be winde, and come to nothing. *Prosper now thy servant,* saith he.

Let us learne this lesson likewise. If wee come to God in a particular busynesse, that wee are not so

confident in, to be pleasing
to God: yet in generall to
submit our selves, Lord
prosper thy servant, goe
before thy servant, let me
deale in nothing against
thy will, direct mee what
is for thy glory; and not
to prescribe or limit God.
*Prosper thy servant this
day.*

And



*And grant him mercy in
the sight of this man.*

HEE comes more particularly to his request, *Grant me mercy in the sight of this man.* We see that

A King is a great organ or instrument to convey good things from God (the King of Kings) to men.

Therefore hee prayes that God would give him favour in the sight of the King. For a King is the first wheele that mooves

The King
a great in-
strument
to convey
good
things fro
God to
to men,

all other wheeles, and as it were the sunne of the common wealth; or the first moover that mooves all inferiour orbes: therefore in heavenly wisedome he desires God to give him favour with him. For if he had that, the King could turne all the inferiour orbes to his pleasure. Indeede it were a point worthy enlarging; but that it is not so seasonable for this time, the time being already spent. You see what great good God conveys by Kings and Princes. And when God meanes to doe good to a Church or state, hee raiseth up *nursing fathers and nursing*

nursing mothers, he wil raise up both Kings, and subordinate *Nehemias*'s, excellent men, when hee hath excellent things to doe.

But the maine thing here intended, which I will but touch, is, That considering they stand in such a subordination to God, as to be instruments to convey so much good, or so much ill, as they may as it is said of *Feroboam*; they either cause others to sinne, or to worshippe God. Therfore we should doe as good *Nehemiah*, hee prayes that he might finde favour in his sight.

A wise and holy prayer, hee begins at the head, he

D 5 goes

obseru.
In busines
with great
men looke
first to
God.

goes to the spring of all good. *Prayer* is the messenger, or ambassador of the soule; beeing the ambassadour of the soule, it goes to the highest, to the *King of Kings* first, to the *Lord of Lords* first; it goes to the highest moover of all: and then desires him to moove the next immediate subordinate moover, that is, the King, that hee may moove other orbis under him, that things may bee carried by a gracious sweet course to a blessed issue. Therefore the observation hence is this. That when we have to do any thing with great men, with Kings, &c. how ever

begin

beginne with the King of Kings, and doe all in heaven, before wee doe it in earth: for heaven makes the lawes, that earth is governed by. Let earth conclude what it will, there will be conclusions in heaven that will overthrow al their conclusions. Therefore in our prayers wee should beginne with God, and desire him with earnest and fervent intreaties, that hee would set al a going, that hee would set in frame these inferiour causes. And when wee have gotten what wee would in heaven, it is easie to get in earth. Let us win what wee desire in heaven at Gods

Gods hands , and then what an easie thing is it to worke with Princes, and other governours in state, when we have gotten God once : hath not hee *the hearts of Kings in his hand as the rivers of waters* : to turne this way or that the way ? As a skilfull man derives water by this channell or by that, as he opens a vent for the water. So God opens a way to vent the deliberations, and determinations of Kings and Princes to runne this way or that to this good or to that , as hee pleaseth Therfore considering that there is an absolute dependance of all inferiour things

things from God, when we have to do with Kings or great men, let us alwaies beginne with prayer.

As *Jacob* when hee was to deale with *Esaū*, hee falls down and prayes first; and when hee had gotten of God by prayer, God, that makes even of enemies friends, hee turned *Esaūs* heart, of an enemie to bee a friend. And God put into *Jacobs* heart a wise course to effect this, as to offer a present, and to give him titles, *My Lord Esaū, &c.* God, when he will effect a thing amongst men, & heare the prayers that are made to him for the

the favour of men, he will put into their hearts such waies whereby they shall prevaile with men, as *Jacob* did with *Esaū*. So *Hester*, before she goes to *Ahasueros*, she gate in heaven first by prayer, when shee had obtained of God by prayer¹, how placable and sweet was *Ahasueros* to her? So we see in other places of Scripture; when holy men have beene to deale with men, they began with God.

I beseech you therefore learne this point of Christian wisedome; if you would speede well (as we all desire to speede well in our businesse), especially those

those that have publike imployments , that they would pray to God , that hath the hearts of Kings and Princes in his government and guidance, that he would make them favorable. And not to thinke to carry things in a violent course; for then God doth not usually give that good successe : but to carry things in a Religious course to the King of heaven, and then to know in what termes to stand in all inferiour things, as may stand with the will of God in heaven. ^{and soe} If so be there bee a dependance of all inferiours to God ; then we must not offend

offend God, and goe against conscience for any: because hee is *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* He doth not set up authoritie against himselfe, to disarme and disable himselfe: he never went to set up Gods under him, to make him a Cypher, that hee should make them Gods, and God a man, or no bodie; to alter all the frame of things. He never meant to set up any ordinance to nullifie and make himselfe nobodie. Therefore I say wee ought to pray to God for Kings, that so in our obedience we may be sure to doe nothing against conscience for

for any creature ; we must do all things that possible can be, that may procure the favour and ingratiate us, because it is in vaine to pray, unlesse wee use all possible meanes to winne their favour : but if it can-
not be upō good tearmes,
Then whether to obey God or man judge ye. And as the three young men, *wee take no thoughts to answer in this matter ; our God can defend us if he will.* And as Hester said, *If I perish, I perish.* When things are cleare, we are to be resolute. Yet reserving due respect to Gods ordinance, and to his lieftenant upon earth, I say alwaies reserving due respect

respect, and using meanes to win favour, and also to use prayer.

Holy *Nehemiah*, hee prayes here, and together with that he attends upon the King ; as good *Jacob* observed *Esau*: so all good meanes must bee used, or else God will not blesse our proceedings.

Remember, that all inferiour gouernours whatsoever, they are subordinate and dependant, and therefore they must bee regulated by a superior. They are limited; they are dependant, they are derivative: they are dependant upon God, they are derived from

from him. Therfore as the Apostle saith that *servants must obey their masters in the Lord.* So wee must obey, & do all in the Lord; that limitation must be alwaies added: but reserving that, it is a good thing to pray that there may be favour from the King: because it is of much consequence to bring businesse to a good issue. And with prayer there must be a using meanes to get favour, alwaies with this liberty, to doe it so farre as we can with preserving a good conscience.

As they have a distinction among civilians, there is a parting with a thing

thing *Cumulativé* and *privativé*. *Cumulativé*, that is, when wee part with a thing so, as that we reserve the proprietie: *privativé*, when wee give away the proprietie and all. Now so G O D parts with nothing below, as to strip himselfe, but *cumulativé*, hee derives authority to others, but reserves the propriety to himselfe. Therefore we must obey them in him, and with this limitation as it may stand with his favour.

To draw to a conclusion, in a word. You see here that any good Christian may be a good statesman in one good sence; what

A good
Christian,
is a good
Statesman

what is that? A good Christian hath credit in Heaven, and he hath a spirit of prayer, and his prayer can set God on worke, and God can set the King on worke, and hee can set his subjects on worke. Now he that can prevaile with God, to prevaile with the Gods upon earth here: surely such a man is a profitable man in the state. And you know God, he can alter all matters, and mould all things: it is but a word of his mouth. And what God can doe, prayer can doe; for prayer bindes God, because it is the prayer of faith: and faith (as it were) over-

overcomes God. Now prayer is the flame of faith ; the vent of faith, & faith is a victorious triumphant grace with God himselfe. If it bee any, it is Christians that can prevaile with God for a blessing upon a State; then certainly there is no good Christian but is of excellent service in the state, though in particular perhaps he hath not pollicie, and wisedom and government: yet hee hath Gods eare to heare him, and hee can pray to God, that God would make the King, and other subordinate Magistrates, favorable.

You

You see what great good , a good man may doe in a State. *The Innocent man delivers the Island,* as it is in *Job.* And the *poor wise man delivers the citie,* as it is in *Ecclesiastes.* A few holy gracious men, that have grace and credit in Heaven above, they may moove God to set all things in a blessed frame below. And surely if this holy meanes were used , things would bee better then they are : and till this be used, we can never look for the good successe and issue of things that otherwise we may hope for.

Diverse things might be spoken of the doctrinal part

God hath
our hearts
in his go-
vernment
more then
wee our
selves.

part, I will give you but a word of it. That God hath our hearts in his government more then we our selves. I speake it to informe our judgement in a point of doctrine, whether God foresee and determine of things below upon forefight which way they shall goe; or whether hee foreordaine, that they shall goe this way, because hee directs them thus; that is to make God, God indeede: Hee determines that these things shall be, because he determines in the series, and order of causes to bring things to passe, and to guide Kings and Princes

ces and Magistrates, and all this way. Againe, whether God hath set all men at liberty (in matters of Grace especially) that they may apply grace at their liberty, which way they wil, and in fore-sight which way they will apply their liberty to determine thus, or thus of them. This is to make every mans will a God, and to divest God of his honour, as if God could foresee the inclination of the creature without foresight that hee meant to incline it this way, or that way.

Can God foresee any entitie, any thing that hath a beeing in nature, or grace

E without

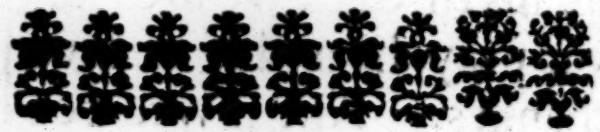
without foresight to direct it this way or that way? he cannot, this is to make him no God. Wee see God hath the hearts of Kings in his power, and that is the ground of prayer for grace to them. Why should we pray for them, if they could apply their own will which way they would? Why should wee give thankes for that wee have liberty to doe this way, or that way? It stopps devotion, and petition, and thanksgiving, to say that the creature hath libertie to apply it selfe, and God seeing it would applie it selfe thus, determined so. Oh, no; wee must

must goe to God, he hath set down an order & course of meanes, and in the use of those meanes desire him to guide us by his good spirit, to enlighten our understandings , to guide our wills and affecti-
ons by his holy spirit, be-
cause our hearts are in his
governement more then
our owne. If it were need-
full to prove it, I could
prove it at large : if there
had beene such aliberty,
good *Nehemiah* would ne-
ver have madethis prayer.
But God doth strangely
put thoughts and guide
all, even of himselfe: as
we may see excellently in
the storie of *Hester*) I will

give you but that example
and instance,) what a
strange thing was it that
Ahasueros could not sleep,
and when hee could not
sleep to call for the book,
and then that hee should
reade of *Mordecay*; and
therupon to advance *Mor-
decay*: all this tended to
the good of the Church;
it was a strange thing. And
so in other things. It is a
strange thing that God
should put little thoughts
and desires into great per-
sons, and then follow it
with this circumstance,
and that, & so bring things
to passe: all this is from
God Except we hold this,
that God rules al without,
and

and especially the hearts of men , where it is his especiall prerogative to set up his throne : we shall never pray heartily, or give thankes. And if wee doe pray and give thankes, he will put thoughts into governours mindes, strange thoughts and resolutions for the good of the Church, that we could never have thought off: nor could come otherwise but from the great God of heaven and earth. We shall see a strange providence concurre to the good of al. But I must leave the enlargement of these things to your own thoughts and meditations.

FINIS.



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Thomas Wykes.

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1639.



